



CALL FOR PROPOSALS – EAC/S54/2019

*Second pilot VET mobility scheme for the
Western Balkans*

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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1. INTRODUCTION – BACKGROUND

The flag Erasmus+, the European Union's programme for education, training, youth and sport, offers training, learning and mobility opportunities for Vocational Education and Training (VET) learners and staff, in Erasmus+ Programme Countries¹ (27 EU Member States + 6). No Programme Countries, otherwise known as "Partner Countries" can take part mainly in higher education and youth activities, which are open to the whole world.

A move to internationalise the VET sector is taking place in the EU and a number of Partner Countries are asking for opening of the VET actions under Erasmus+ to international cooperation, to benefit from the good experience, which has been accumulated in the framework of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes.

The Economic Reform Programme for the Western Balkans recognises the importance of vocational educational and training (VET) in underpinning industry and propelling economic growth. VET graduates are also job creators. Labour market relevant skills acquisition must be adopted and recognised in all types of training, be it formal, informal or non-formal as most of the training is happening in the informal sector. VET must be a coherent system whose purpose is to meet the demand of socio-economic development in terms of quality-skilled human resources. In coherence with the 2016 Torino Process Regional Report, the Western Balkans have VET's responsiveness to the economy high on their reform agenda in a context of sluggish employment and high youth unemployment. Currently in the Western Balkans, the relevance of VET to employment is limited, training is costly and investments by governments challenging. The enrolment levels have increased, but the access of young women to VET remains challenging.

With the publication of the new Strategy on "A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans" by the Commission, adopted on 6 February 2018, the idea of VET mobility has experienced a regained momentum. The Strategy provides significantly enhanced EU engagement to better support the Western Balkans' preparations on the European path and the VET scheme is one of the actions foreseen for "Supporting socio-economic development", one of the six flagship initiatives.

The four targeted Erasmus+ partners in the Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo* have been interested in a possibility of organising an Erasmus-type mobility action for VET, to benefit from the rich experience accumulated in the past and last year's first pilot VET scheme for the Western Balkans and Africa (EAC EAC/S34/2018).

It is in this overall context that the present second pilot VET mobility scheme is being proposed.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/who-can-take-part_en

² This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

2. OBJECTIVE - THEMES – PRIORITIES

The general objective is to contribute to the improvement and modernisation of VET systems in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo*, as well as reinforcing the links between VET and the labour market.

More specifically, the aim of the call is to enhance the capacity of VET providers in the four mentioned partners by promoting mobility activities aimed at improving the skills and competences of VET teachers, learners and managers and the occupational prospects of young students.

Expected General Outputs

- Exchange programmes between the four mentioned partners and the European VET providers;
- The knowledge, technical and pedagogical skills of VET teachers is improved;
- The knowledge of VET managerial staff is improved;
- The transversal, generic and subject specific skills of learners are enhanced.

Indicative activities: Mobility arrangements (identification of target groups, development of individual programmes and action plans for schools and teaching staff, implementation of mobility in the EU), document best practices, dissemination at national and regional level, creation and institution of networks and partnerships for exchanges.

3. TIMETABLE

	Steps	Date and time or indicative period
(a)	Publication of the call	<i>8 April 2020</i>
(b)	Deadline for submitting applications	<i>17 June 2020 – 12.00 noon (Brussels time)</i>
(c)	Evaluation period	<i>June – August 2020</i>
(d)	Information to applicants	<i>November 2020</i>
(e)	Signature of grant agreement(s)	<i>November- 2020</i>

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE

The Commission expects to fund a maximum of four proposals. The total maximum budget earmarked for the co-financing is estimated at 4 (four) million EUR.

The maximum grant for each proposals will be 1 (one) million EUR and the minimum grant will be EUR 700,000 (seven-hundred thousand euros).

The Commission reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applications must be sent no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to in section 3.

Applications must be submitted in writing (see section 14), using the electronic submission system available [here](#)³.

Applications must be drafted in one of the EU official languages. Applications in English, French or German are strongly encouraged.

Failure to comply with those requirements will lead to the rejection of the application.

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

6.1 Eligible participating organisations and applicants

Eligible participating organisations	<p>A participating organisation can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any public or private organisation in the field of vocational education and training (referred to as a VET provider), legally registered in an Erasmus+ Programme Country or in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo*, providing courses that lead to a qualification recognised by the competent authorities and accredited by the relevant national authorities; or Any legally registered consortium of public or private VET providers registered in an Erasmus+ Programme Country or in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo*; or Any public or private organisation active in the labour market (referred to as a company) and legally registered in an Erasmus+ Programme Country or in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo*.
Who can apply	<p>In order to be eligible for a grant, the applicant must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a public or private VET organisation active in the field of vocational education and training and legally registered in an Erasmus+ Programme Country; or a legally registered consortium of public or private VET organisations registered in an Erasmus+ Programme Country; <p>The applicant (or lead applicant in the case of a consortium) must be established in an <u>EU Member State</u>.</p>
Number of participating organisations	<p>The proposal must include in total at least 7 organisations of which at least 5 organisations from 3 different Erasmus+ Programme Countries and 2 organisations from 2 out of the four targeted partners in the Western Balkans (Albania,</p>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/funding-opportunities/vet-mobility-pilot-2019_en

	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo*). The proposal cannot include more than 12 partners.
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In addition, organisations active in the labour market or in the fields of education in an Erasmus+ Programme Country or in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo* can also be involved in the project as associated members. Their role in the project and activities must be clearly described, but is exclusively of an advisory nature rather than an active role and they are therefore not considered as project partners and their costs are not eligible or subject to any reimbursement, nor to funding.

Please be aware that eligibility criteria must be complied with for the entire duration of the grant.

Please be aware that following the entry into force of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement⁴ on 1 February 2020 and in particular Articles 127(6), 137 and 138, the references to natural or legal persons residing or established in a Member State of the European Union are to be understood as including natural or legal persons residing or established in the United Kingdom. UK residents and entities are therefore eligible to participate under this call.

The applicant organisation and each partner of the consortium **must have a valid PIC number** already at the application stage in order to submit a valid proposal.

Supporting documents

In order to assess the applicants' eligibility, the following supporting documents are requested:

- **private entity:** extract from the official journal, copy of articles of association, extract of trade or association register, certificate of liability to VAT (if, as in certain countries, the trade register number and VAT number are identical, only one of these documents is required);
- **public entity:** copy of the resolution, decision or other official document establishing the public-law entity.

6.2 Eligible activities

Mobility arrangements including the identification of the target groups of staff, managers and students, preparation of training programme and learning outcomes and selection of participants;

- Mobility activities consisting of:
 - Learners' mobility in VET providers and/or companies abroad, from 2 weeks to less than 3 months;
 - Learners' longer-term mobility in VET/providers and/or companies abroad (ErasmusPro-type mobility⁵) from 3 to 12 months;
 - Staff mobility, including:

⁴ Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community

⁵ Long-term mobility in VET providers and/or companies abroad from 3 to 12 months

- Teaching/training assignments abroad – this activity allows staff of VET providers to teach at a partner VET provider abroad. It also allows staff of companies to provide training at a VET provider abroad.
 - Staff training abroad – this activity supports the professional development of VET staff in the form of a work placement or a job shadowing/observation period abroad in a company or any other VET provider.
 - The duration of staff mobilities for these purposes depends on the nature of the activity and is limited to a maximum duration of 3 months.
- Mobility activities will focus on learners and staff incoming to the EU rather than outgoing from the EU (which will be limited to staff only).

	Learners	Staff
Incoming to Erasmus+ Programme Countries	Yes	Yes
Outgoing from Erasmus+ Programme Countries	No	Yes

Mobility for training and retraining purposes is only eligible for staff from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo*.

- Training activities;
- Conferences, seminars;
- Communication, awareness raising and dissemination actions at national and regional level;
- Actions aiming at the creation and improvement of networks, exchanges of good practice;

Mapping, analysis and research of best practice to develop in the future a comprehensive VET mobility programme.

6.3 Thematic areas of study

The present call does not intend to focuss on a particular VET sector. Each application should explain the strategic importance of the selected VET scetor in each case.

6.4 Implementation period

The maximum duration of each project is 42 months.

Applications for projects scheduled to run for a longer period than that specified in this call for proposals will not be accepted.

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

7.1 Exclusion

The authorising officer shall exclude an applicant from participating in call for proposals procedures where:

- (a) the applicant is bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures, its assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, it is in an arrangement with creditors, its business activities are suspended, or it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under EU or national laws or regulations;
- (b) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the applicable law;
- (c) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is guilty of grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards of the profession to which the applicant belongs, or by having engaged in any wrongful intent or gross negligence, including, in particular, any of the following:
 - (i) fraudulently or negligently misrepresenting information required for the verification of the absence of grounds for exclusion or the fulfilment of eligibility or selection criteria or in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision;
 - (ii) entering into agreement with other applicants with the aim of distorting competition;
 - (iii) violating intellectual property rights;
 - (iv) attempting to influence the decision-making process of the Commission during the award procedure;
 - (v) attempting to obtain confidential information that may confer upon it undue advantages in the award procedure;
- (d) it has been established by a final judgment that the applicant is guilty of any of the following:
 - (i) fraud, within the meaning of Article 3 of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Article 1 of the Convention on the protection of the European Communities' financial interests, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 July 1995;
 - (ii) corruption, as defined in Article 4(2) of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 or Article 3 of the Convention on the fight against corruption involving officials of the European Communities or officials of Member States of the European Union, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 May 1997, or conduct referred to in Article 2(1) of Council Framework Decision 2003/568/JHA, or corruption as defined in the applicable law;
 - (iii) conduct related to a criminal organisation, as referred to in Article 2 of Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA;
 - (iv) money laundering or terrorist financing within the meaning of Article 1(3), (4) and (5) of Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council;
 - (v) terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, as defined in Articles 1 and 3 of Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA, respectively, or inciting, aiding, abetting or attempting to commit such offences, as referred to in Article 4 of that Decision;

- (vi) child labour or other offences concerning trafficking in human beings as referred to in Article 2 of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council;
- (e) the applicant has shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision financed by the Union's budget, which has led to its early termination or to the application of liquidated damages or other contractual penalties, or which has been discovered following checks, audits or investigations by an authorising officer, OLAF or the Court of Auditors;
- (f) it has been established by a final judgment or final administrative decision that the applicant has committed an irregularity within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95;
- (g) it has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that the applicant has created an entity in a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or any other legal obligations of mandatory application in the jurisdiction of its registered office, central administration or principal place of business;
- (h) it has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that an entity has been created with the intent referred to in point (g);
- (i) for the situations referred to in points (c) to (h) above, the applicant is subject to:
 - (i) facts established in the context of audits or investigations carried out by European Public Prosecutor's Office after its establishment, the Court of Auditors, the European Anti-Fraud Office or the internal auditor, or any other check, audit or control performed under the responsibility of an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body;
 - (ii) non-final judgments or non-final administrative decisions which may include disciplinary measures taken by the competent supervisory body responsible for the verification of the application of standards of professional ethics;
 - (iii) facts referred to in decisions of persons or entities being entrusted with EU budget implementation tasks;
 - (iv) information transmitted by Member States implementing Union funds;
 - (v) decisions of the Commission relating to the infringement of Union competition law or of a national competent authority relating to the infringement of Union or national competition law; or
 - (vi) decisions of exclusion by an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body.

7.2 Remedial measures

If an applicant declares one of the situations of exclusion listed above (see section 7.1), it must indicate the measures it has taken to remedy the exclusion situation, thus demonstrating its reliability. This may include e.g. technical, organisational and personnel measures to correct the conduct and prevent further occurrence, compensation of damage or payment of fines or of any taxes or social security contributions. The relevant documentary evidence which illustrates the remedial measures taken must be provided in annex to the declaration. This does not apply for situations referred in point (d) of section 7.1.

7.3 Rejection from the call for proposals

The authorising officer shall not award a grant to an applicant who:

- (a) is in an exclusion situation established in accordance with section 7.1; or
- (b) has misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or has failed to supply that information; or
- (c) was previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equality of treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

Administrative sanctions (exclusion) may be imposed on applicants and partners where applicable, if any of the declarations or information provided as a condition for participating in this procedure prove to be false.

7.4 Supporting documents

Applicants and partners must provide a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in Articles 136(1) and 141 FR, by filling in the relevant form attached to the application form accompanying the call for proposals.

The applicant and each partner in the consortium should sign each a separate declaration in their own name.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

8.1 Financial capacity

The financial capacity will be assessed based on the methodology described in Annex 7a

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the duration of the grant and to participate in its funding.

For grants for an action > EUR 750,000, proof of economic and financial capacity is provided by the following documents:

- the declaration on the honour by the grant applicant (see Annex 1);
- for economic operators required under national law to keep a complete set of accounts: the balance sheet, profit and loss account and annexes of the last financial year for which accounts have been closed;
- for economic operators required under national law to keep a simplified set of accounts: the schedule of actual expenditure and income and the annex showing assets and liabilities for the last financial year for which accounts have been closed.
- the economic and financial capacity analysis form showing the financial data of the economic operator, completed and signed by the operator (see Annex 7b Economic and Financial Capacity Analysis Form);

In addition, **an audit report** produced by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts shall be provided for the last financial year available, where such an audit report is available or whenever a statutory report is required by law.

If the audit report is not available AND a statutory report is not required by law, a self-declaration signed by the applicant's authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for the last financial year available must be provided.

In the event of an application grouping several applicants (consortium), the thresholds apply to each applicant.

In the case of legal entities forming **one** applicant ("the sole applicant", as specified in section 6.1, the above requirements apply to each one of those entities.

On the basis of the documents submitted, if the European Commission considers that financial capacity is weak, it may:

- request further information;
- decide not to give pre-financing;
- decide to give pre-financing paid in instalments;
- decide to give pre-financing covered by a bank guarantee (see section 11.6.2 below);
- where applicable, require the joint and several financial liability of all the co-beneficiaries.

If the Commission considers that the financial capacity is insufficient it will reject the application.

8.2 Operational capacity

Applicants must have the professional competencies, as well as appropriate qualifications necessary to complete the proposed action. In this respect, applicants have to submit a declaration on their honour and the following supporting documents:

Profiles/experience of the Applicant and the Coordinator:

Project Coordinator

- the project coordinator should have at least 3 years of experience in the field of education, good knowledge of the EU and the Western Balkans, experience with international cooperation in the field of education (and preferably vocational education and training) and excellent skills in written and spoken English (native-level language skills or equivalent as guaranteed by a certificate or past relevant experience (level C1));
- the project coordinator should have experience in project management, including overseeing project delivery, quality control of delivered service, client orientation and conflict resolution experience with at least, within the team, two international cooperation projects in the field of vocational education and training delivered in the last five years with a minimum value of at least € 200.000.

Applicants

- applicants must demonstrate that they have the capacity to work in the languages that are covered by the proposal, either through the curriculum vitae of the

people primarily responsible for managing the project or evidence of least two projects in the last three years showing the necessary language coverage;

- applicants with an Erasmus VET Charter do not have to demonstrate their experience with 2 international cooperation projects but the coordinators must demonstrate that they have delivered at least two projects of this minimum value in the last five years.

Profiles/experience of the project team:

- the project team should include at least 6 experts in vocational education and training with relevant degree and/or 3 years professional experience in the field of vocational education delivery/management/quality assurance;
- the team for exploitation, communication and dissemination should collectively have proven experience of managing and maintaining websites, outreach activities, specialised articles and more general press;

Supporting documents:

- curriculum vitae or description of the profile of the people primarily responsible for managing and implementing the operation (accompanied where appropriate, like in the field of research and education, by a list of relevant publications);
- an exhaustive list of previous similar projects and activities performed and connected to the policy field and the actions to be carried out;

In the case of legal entities forming **one** applicant (the "sole" applicant), as specified in section 6.1, the above requirements apply to each one of those entities.

9. AWARD CRITERIA

Within the limits of the budget available, grants will be awarded to those proposals which respond to the qualitative criteria in the best way.

Eligible applications will be assessed separately for each lot, based on the following criteria:

<p>Relevance of the project</p> <p>(criterion 1) (maximum 30 points): A minimum threshold of 15 points out of 30 will be applied to criterion 1; proposals falling below this threshold will be rejected.</p>	<p>Under criterion 1, proposals will be assessed on the basis of the extent to which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the proposal is based on a genuine and adequate needs analysis; – the objectives are clearly defined, realistic and address issues relevant to the target group needs; – the rationale for the choice of countries and sectors is clearly articulated and relates to the policy objectives described in the introduction to the call; – the proposal is innovative in its content and/or complementary to other initiatives carried out by participating organisations; – the proposal brings added value through results
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<p>Quality of the project design and its implementation, including the proposed methodology (criterion 2) (maximum 25 points): A minimum threshold of 12.5 points out of 25 will be applied to criterion 2; proposals falling below this threshold will be rejected.</p>	<p>that can only be attained on a regional level.</p> <p>Under criterion 2, proposals will be assessed according to the quality of the overall design of the activities proposed and to the methodology used to implement them. The following aspects will be taken into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the proposal ensures consistency between objectives, methodology, activities and budget proposed; - the proposal is gender sensitive both in terms of objectives and activities; - the work programme is clear, structured, with clear milestones, and covers all phases of the action; - the proposed methodology, rationale and organisation are effective and fit for purpose (including the timetable and monitoring), and timelines, organisation, tasks and responsibilities are well defined and realistic; - the proposal considers state-of-the-art methods and techniques, and leads to innovative results and solutions - the proposed action is cost-effective, in particular the relevance and quality of the means of implementation and the resources deployed in relation to the objectives envisaged. The proposal allocates appropriate resources to each activity and the budget is neither overestimated not underestimated; - solid management arrangements are foreseen. Timelines, organisation, tasks and responsibilities are well defined and realistic; - the arrangements for mobility (the support provided both in practical terms but also for learning and training activities) are appropriate and complete; - the proposal includes quality arrangements for the recognition and validation of the participants learning outcomes by the host institution and institution of origin; - the proposal is producing high-quality learning outcomes for participants and reinforcing the capacities and international scope of the participating organisations; - control measures (continuous quality evaluation, peer reviews, benchmarking activities) and quality indicators ensure that the action is of high quality and efficient. Challenges and risks are clearly identified and mitigating actions properly addressed. Expert review processes are an
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<p>Quality of the project teams and cooperation arrangements</p> <p>(criterion 3) (maximum 20 points): A minimum threshold of 10 points out of 20 will be applied to criterion 3; proposals falling below this threshold will be rejected.</p>	<p>integral part of the proposal.</p> <p>Under criterion 3, proposals will be assessed according to the quality of the cooperation arrangements. The following aspects will be taken into account</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the composition and representation of the partners in the sector concerned are convincingly demonstrated and the spread and representativeness of the partners has a potential for high impact; - where relevant, the proposal also includes the most appropriate and diverse range of non-academic partners; - the distribution of responsibilities demonstrates the clear commitment and active contribution of all participating organisations in relation to their specific expertise and capacity; - an effective, realistic and agreed mechanism by all partners is proposed to ensure a good coordination, decision-making and communication between the participating organisations, participants and any other relevant stakeholder.
<p>Sustainability, impact and dissemination of the expected results</p> <p>(criterion 4) (maximum 25 points): A minimum threshold of 12.5 points out of 25 will be applied to criterion 4; applications falling below this threshold will be rejected.</p>	<p>Under criterion 4, the measures proposed for sustainability, impact and dissemination of results will be assessed against the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the proposal outlines the potential impact of the project on participants and participating organisations during and after the project lifetime and outside the organisations and individuals directly participating in the project at local, national, and regional level; - the proposal contributes to the promotion of mobility, cooperation and recognition structures; - the proposal demonstrates how the outcomes of the project will be used by the partners and other stakeholders, providing means to measure exploitation within the project lifetime and a strategy for after; - the proposal provides a clear plan for the dissemination of results and includes appropriate activities, tools and channels to ensure that the results and benefits will be spread effectively to stakeholders (policy makers, guidance professionals, professional associations, enterprises and young learners in compulsory education concerning occupations with high labour market demand or new business creation potential) and indicates which partners will be responsible for the dissemination; - the proposal shows societal and economic

	<p>relevance and outreach. It is likely to significantly increase partners' capacity to implement relevant training. It also provides pertinent measures to monitor progress and assess the expected impact (short-term and long-term);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - if relevant, the proposal describes how the materials, documents and media produced will be made freely available and promoted and does not contain disproportionate limitations; - the proposal includes appropriate measures and resources to ensure that the results and benefits achieved will be sustained beyond the project lifetime. The proposal explains how and with which resources (other than EU funds) this will be done.
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Points will be allocated to eligible applications out of a total of 100 on the basis of the above-specified weighting. Applications falling below any of the thresholds per criterion mentioned above will be rejected.

Moreover, a minimum threshold of 60 points will be applied (4 award criteria combined). Applications falling below this threshold will also be rejected.

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

In the event of a grant awarded by the Commission, a grant agreement, drawn up in EUR and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the applicant, as well as the information on the procedure to formalise the agreement of the parties.

Two copies of the original agreement must be signed first by the beneficiary and returned to the Commission immediately. The Commission will sign it last.

11. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

11.1 Forms of the grant

Bearing in mind the nature of the grant which is to undertake an 'Erasmus' type pilot initiative, the financing mechanism is aligned as much as possible with the Erasmus+ programme, **combining a reimbursement of actually incurred eligible costs and a reimbursement of eligible costs declared on the basis of unit contributions**⁶. Provisions are laid out under these financial provisions and the authorisation to use unit contributions for vocational education and training actions under the 2019 Multi-Country Action Programme⁷ that applicants will find in Annex 11 to this call for proposals.

⁶ DECISION OF THE AUTHORISING OFFICER Ares(2020)1756961 of 25.03.2020 authorising the use of unit contributions for vocational education and training actions under the 2019 Multi-Country Action Programme of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance.

⁷ COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION C(2019) 5515 of 19.07.2019 adopting a Multi-country Action Programme for the year 2019 under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance

11.1.1 Reimbursement of eligible costs declared on the basis of unit contributions based on the Decision of the Authorising Officer Ares(2020)1756961

Unit contributions will be foreseen for the following categories of costs:

- 1) travel costs for staff, learners and accompanying persons;
- 2) subsistence (or individual support) for staff and learners and
- 3) staff costs.

The amount per unit will be paid for every unit produced or consumed.

11.1.2 Reimbursement of costs actually incurred

The grant will be defined by financing a maximum of 100 % to the eligible costs actually incurred and declared by the beneficiary. Full financing is essential, as the call will cover activities which have never been delivered before within this regional setup due to the pilot nature of the intervention. This form of cooperation is new and will come on top of the core activities of the applicants.

The reimbursement of costs actually incurred applies to the following categories of costs:

- a) Special needs support. Additional costs directly related to participants with related to participants with special needs.

A person with special needs is a potential participant whose individual physical, mental or health-related conditions such that his/her participation in the project / mobility Action would not be possible without extra financial support. Organisations that have selected learners and/or staff with special needs can apply for additional grant support in order to cover the supplementary costs for their participation in the mobility activities. For persons with special needs, the grant support may therefore be higher than the maximum individual grant amounts set out below. Organisations will describe on their website how learners and staff with special needs can request such additional grant support.

Extra funding for learners and staff with special needs may be provided also from other sources at local, regional and/or national level. As regards the accompanying persons for learners and staff with special needs, they are entitled to receive a contribution based on real costs. The request for financial support must be motivated and well justified in the application form once participants have been selected.

- b) Exceptional costs of participants' mobility. For expensive travel costs of participants in the case of mobility between Programme Countries or between Programme and Partner Countries.

Only participants eligible for a standard travel grant are eligible for exceptional costs for expensive travel. Beneficiaries of mobility projects will be allowed to claim financial support for expensive travel costs of participants under the budget heading "exceptional costs" (up to a maximum of 80% of total eligible costs). This will be allowed provided that beneficiaries can justify that the standard funding rules (based on unit costs per travel distance band) do not cover at least 70% of the travel costs of participants. If awarded, the exceptional costs for expensive travel replace the standard travel grant.

- c) Subcontracting of activities not carried out by staff in the partner organisations. It is intended for specific, time-bound, project-related tasks which cannot be performed by the consortium members themselves. It includes self-employed / free-lance experts. Sub-contracting to external bodies should be very occasional.

The specific competences and particular expertise needed to reach the project objectives should be found in the consortium and should determine its composition. Sub-contracting for project-management related tasks is therefore not allowed.

Typical activities which may be sub-contracted are (provided they are not carried out by beneficiaries' staff):

- Evaluation activities and auditing
- IT courses
- Language courses
- Printing, publishing and dissemination activities
- Translation services
- Web design and maintenance

In all cases, tasks to be subcontracted have to be identified in the proposal (based on relevant supporting information, along with clear reasons as to why the task cannot be carried out by the beneficiaries) and the estimated amount entered in the budget.

11.1.3 Conditions for compliance of the beneficiary's usual cost accounting practices

The beneficiary must ensure that the cost accounting practices used for the purpose of declaring eligible costs are in compliance with the following conditions:

- (a) the cost accounting practices that are used must constitute the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary. The beneficiary must apply those practices in a consistent manner, based on objective criteria irrespective of the source of funding (EU financing or other);
- (b) the costs declared can be directly reconciled with the amounts recorded in its general accounts; and
- (c) the categories of costs used for the purpose of determining the costs declared do not include any ineligible costs or costs already covered by other forms of grant.

Contributions based on unit costs, real costs and flat rate will be paid in full provided the corresponding part of the action is implemented properly (with the required quality, fully and on time). If the corresponding part of the action is not properly implemented the amount of the grant will be reduced proportionately or, where applicable, the beneficiary will be required to repay any excess amounts already received as pre-financing payment.

The fulfilment of the above conditions triggering the payment of the unit costs, real costs and flat rate will be checked at the latest before the payment of the balance. In addition, the fulfilment of those conditions may be subject to ex post controls.

Further details are provided in Annex 9.

The Commission reserves its right to challenge the amounts of unit costs or real costs by ex-post controls, where:

- the Commission did not confirm the usual cost accounting practices as complying with the conditions set out in this call, or
- the costs are not calculated in accordance with the confirmed cost accounting practices.

At reporting stage, at the end of the project, the actual contribution of the EU will be re-calculated globally for the overall project, using the unit cost (for salaries, travels and costs of stay) and real cost (for equipment and sub-contracting) approaches, on the basis of the actual activities carried out.

Payment of the grant on the basis of the actual contribution does not affect the right of access to the statutory records of the beneficiaries for the purposes of:

- reviewing them for future grants or
- protection of the Union financial interests, e.g. detection of fraud, irregularities or breach of obligations.

11.2 Eligible costs

Eligible costs shall meet all the following criteria:

- they are incurred by the beneficiary.
- they are incurred during the duration of the action, with the exception of costs relating to final reports and audit certificates;
 - The period of eligibility of costs will start as specified in the grant agreement.
- they are indicated in the estimated budget;
- they are necessary for the implementation of the action which is the subject of the grant;
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary;
- they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- they are reasonable, justified, and comply with the requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

The beneficiary's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the action/project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

Eligible costs may be direct or indirect.

11.2.1. Eligible direct costs

The eligible direct costs for the action are those costs which:

With due regard for the conditions of eligibility set out above, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the action and which can therefore be booked to it directly, such as :

- (a) the costs of personnel working under an employment contract with the beneficiary or an equivalent appointing act and assigned to the action, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual policy on remuneration. Those costs include actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in the remuneration. They may also comprise additional remunerations, including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of the nature of those contracts, provided that they are paid in a

consistent manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required, independently from the source of funding used;

The costs of natural persons working under a contract with the beneficiary other than an employment contract or who are seconded to the beneficiary by a third party against payment may also be included under such personnel costs, provided that the following conditions are fulfilled:

- (i) the person works under conditions similar to those of an employee (in particular regarding the way the work is organised, the tasks that are performed and the premises where they are performed);
- (ii) the result of the work belongs to the beneficiary (unless exceptionally agreed otherwise); and
- (iii) the costs are not significantly different from the costs of staff performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the beneficiary;

The recommended methods for the calculation of direct personnel costs are provided in Annex 10.

- (b) costs of travel and related subsistence allowances, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel;
- (c) costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they:
 - (i) are purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement; and
 - (ii) are directly assigned to the action;
- (d) costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the Agreement (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action, audits, translations, reproduction), including the costs of requested financial guarantees, provided that the corresponding services are purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement;
- (e) costs derived by subcontracts, provided that the specific conditions on subcontracting as laid down in the grant agreement are met;
- (f) duties, taxes and charges paid by the beneficiary, notably value added tax (VAT), provided that they are included in eligible direct costs, and unless specified otherwise in the grant agreement.

Further details on the scope of these categories of costs are provided in Annex 9.

11.2.2. Eligible indirect costs (overheads)

Indirect costs are costs that are not directly linked to the action implementation and therefore cannot be attributed directly to it.

A flat-rate of maximum 7% of the total eligible direct costs of the action is eligible as indirect costs, representing the beneficiary's general administrative costs which can be regarded as chargeable to the action/project.

Indirect costs may not include costs entered under another budget heading.

Applicants' attention is drawn to the fact that if they are receiving an operating grant financed by the EU or Euratom budget, they may not declare indirect costs for the period(s) covered by the operating grant, unless they can demonstrate that the operating grant does not cover any costs of the action.

- In order to demonstrate this, in principle, the beneficiary should:
 - a. use *analytical cost accounting that allows to separate all costs (including overheads)* attributable to the operating grant and the action grant. For that purpose the beneficiary should use *reliable accounting codes and allocation keys*

ensuring that *the allocation* of the costs is done in a *fair, objective and realistic way*.

b. *record separately*:

- all costs incurred for the operating grants (i.e. personnel, general running costs and other operating costs linked to the part of its usual annual activities), and
- all costs incurred for the action grants (including the actual indirect costs linked to the action)

If the operating grant covers the entire usual annual activity and budget of the beneficiary, the latter is not entitled to receive any indirect costs under the action grant.

11.3 Ineligible costs

- a) return on capital and dividends paid by a beneficiary;
- b) debt and debt service charges;
- c) provisions for losses or debts;
- d) interest owed;
- e) doubtful debts;
- f) exchange losses;
- g) costs of transfers from the Commission charged by the bank of a beneficiary;
- h) costs declared by the beneficiary under another action receiving a grant financed from the Union budget. Such grants include grants awarded by a Member State and financed from the Union budget and grants awarded by bodies other than the Commission for the purpose of implementing the Union budget. In particular, beneficiaries receiving an operating grant financed by the EU or Euratom budget cannot declare indirect costs for the period(s) covered by the operating grant, unless they can demonstrate that the operating grant does not cover any costs of the action.
- i) contributions in kind from third parties;
- j) excessive or reckless expenditure;
- k) deductible VAT⁸.

In addition, the following categories of costs are also considered as ineligible:

- costs of equipment (new or second-hand) as recorded in the beneficiary's accounting statements, such as: furniture, motor vehicles of any kind, equipment for research and development purposes, telephones, mobile phones, alarm systems and anti-theft systems;
- costs of premises (purchase, heating, maintenance, repairs etc.);
- costs linked to the purchase of real estate;
- depreciation costs.

⁸ VAT will be considered as an eligible cost only if it is not recoverable under the applicable national VZT legislation (in the EU Members States the VAT national legislation translates the VAT Directive 2006/112/EC). The VAT Directive does not apply to non-EU countries. Organisations from the participating non-EU countries can be exempted from taxes (including VAT), duties and charges if an agreement has been signed between the European Commission and the country where the organisation is established.

11.4 Balanced budget

The estimated budget of the action must be attached to the application form. It must have revenue and expenditure in balance.

The budget must be drawn up in euros.

Applicants for whom costs will not be incurred in euros should use the exchange rate published on the Inforeuro website available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm.

11.5 Calculation of the final grant amount

The final amount of the grant is calculated by the Commission at the time of the payment of the balance. The calculation involves the following steps:

Step 1 – Application of the reimbursement rate to the eligible costs

The amount under step 1 is obtained by application of the reimbursement rate specified in section 11.2.1 and 11.2.2 to the eligible costs accepted by the Commission.

Step 2 – Limit to the maximum and minimum amount of the grant

The total amount paid to the beneficiaries by the Commission may in no circumstances exceed the maximum amount of the grant or be lower than the minimum of the grant as indicated in the grant agreement. If the amount obtained following Step 1 is higher or lower than the mentioned amounts, the final amount of the grant is limited to the latter.

Step 3 – Reduction due to improper implementation or breach of other obligations.

The Commission may reduce the maximum amount of the grant if the action has not been implemented properly (i.e. if it has not been implemented or has been implemented poorly, partially or late), or if another obligation under the Agreement has been breached.

The amount of the reduction will be proportionate to the degree to which the action has been implemented improperly or to the seriousness of the breach.

11.6 Reporting and payment arrangements

11.6.1 The beneficiary may request the following payments provided that the conditions of the grant agreement are fulfilled (e.g. payment deadlines, ceilings, etc.). The payment requests shall be accompanied by the documents provided below and detailed in the grant agreement:

▪ Payment request	▪ Accompanying documents
A pre-financing payment corresponding to 50% of the maximum grant amount	(a) bank guarantee (see section 11.6.2)
A second pre-financing payment corresponding to 40% of the maximum grant amount.	(b) technical report on progress (c) statement on the use of the previous pre-financing instalment
<p>Payment of the balance</p> <p>The Commission will establish the amount of this payment on the basis of the calculation of the final grant amount (see section 11.6 above). If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, the beneficiary will be required to reimburse the amount paid in excess by the Commission through a recovery order.</p>	<p>(a) final technical report; (b) final financial statement; (c) summary financial statement aggregating the financial statements already submitted previously and indicating the receipts (d) a certificate on the financial statements and underlying accounts</p>

Specific reporting requirements

With the exception of the pre-financing payment, other payments or recoveries will be made on the basis of the analysis of reports and payment requests submitted by the beneficiary.

The progress report may be submitted when 70% of the first pre-financing has been used up and in any case, by the 18th month of the project at the latest. If the progress report is accompanied by a request for further pre-financing and 70% of the first pre-financing has been used, the further pre-financing will be paid within 60 calendar days. Where the statement on the use of the previous pre-financing shows that less than 70% has been used to cover the costs of the action, the corresponding unused amount will be deducted from the further pre-financing.

The final report is to be submitted two months after the end of the eligibility period of the project. As a general rule, the payment of the balance of the recovery is made within 60 calendar days.

All report templates and forms will be made available with the formal grant agreement.

In case of a weak financial capacity section 8.1 above applies.

11.6.2 Pre-financing guarantee

A pre-financing guarantee for up to the same amount as the pre-financing may be requested in order to limit the financial risks linked to the pre-financing payment.

The financial guarantee, in EUR, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the EU Member States. When the beneficiary is established in a third country, the Commission may agree that a bank or financial institution established in that third country may provide the guarantee if it considers that

the bank or financial institution offers equivalent security and characteristics as those offered by a bank or financial institution established in a Member State. Amounts blocked in bank accounts shall not be accepted as financial guarantees.

The guarantee may be replaced by:

- a joint and several guarantee by a third party or,
- a joint guarantee of the beneficiaries of an action who are parties to the same grant agreement.

The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is gradually cleared against interim payments or the payment of the balance, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

11.7 Other financial conditions

a) **Non-cumulative award**

An action may only receive one grant from the EU budget.

b) **Non-retroactivity**

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed.

A grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun only where the applicant can demonstrate in the grant application the need to start the action before the grant agreement is signed.

In such cases, costs eligible for financing may not have been incurred prior to the date of submission of the grant application.

c) **Implementation contracts/subcontracting**

Where the implementation of the action requires the award of procurement contracts (implementation contracts), the beneficiary must award the contract to the bid offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interests.

The beneficiary is expected to clearly document the tendering procedure and retain the documentation for the event of an audit.

Entities acting in their capacity of contracting authorities in the meaning of Directive 2014/24/EU or contracting entities in the meaning of Directive 2014/25/EU must comply with the applicable national public procurement rules.

Beneficiaries may subcontract tasks forming part of the action. If they do so, they must ensure that, in addition to the above-mentioned conditions of best value for money and absence of conflicts of interests, the following conditions are also complied with:

- a) subcontracting does not cover core tasks of the action;
- b) recourse to subcontracting is justified because of the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;
- c) the estimated costs of the subcontracting are clearly identifiable in the estimated budget;

- d) any recourse to subcontracting, if not provided for in description of the action, is communicated by the beneficiary and approved by the Commission. The Commission may grant approval:
- (i) before any recourse to subcontracting, if the beneficiaries requests an amendment
 - (ii) after recourse to subcontracting if the subcontracting:
 - is specifically justified in the interim or final technical report and
 - does not entail changes to the grant agreement which would call into question the decision awarding the grant or be contrary to the equal treatment of applicants;
- e) the beneficiaries ensure that certain conditions applicable to beneficiaries, enumerated in the grant agreement (e.g. visibility, confidentiality, etc.), are also applicable to the subcontractors.

12. PUBLICITY

12.1 By the beneficiaries

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used.

In this respect, beneficiaries are required to give prominence to the name and emblem of the European Commission on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under the co-financed project.

12.2 By the Commission

With the exception of scholarships paid to natural persons and other direct support paid to natural persons in most need, all information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall be published on an internet site of the European Union institutions no later than the 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded.

The Commission will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary;
- address of the beneficiary when the latter is a legal person, region when the beneficiary is a natural person, as defined on NUTS 2 level⁹ if he/she is domiciled within EU or equivalent if domiciled outside EU;
- subject of the grant;
- amount awarded.

Upon a reasoned and duly substantiated request by the beneficiary, the publication shall be waived if such disclosure risks threatening the rights and freedoms of individuals concerned as protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union or harm the commercial interests of the beneficiaries.

⁹ Commission Regulation (EC) No 105/2007 of 1 February 2007 amending the annexes to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS), OJ L39, 10.2.2007, p.1.

13. PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA

The reply to any call for proposals involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data.

Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested that are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the call for proposal will be processed solely for that purpose by the Director for Innovation, International Cooperation and Sports

Personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System by the Commission, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in Articles 136 and 141 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046¹⁰. For more information see the Privacy Statement on:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/data-protection-public-procurement-procedures_en

14. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals must be submitted by the deadline set out under section 3.

No modification to the application is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects or to correct clerical mistakes, the Commission may contact the applicant during the evaluation process.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection process¹¹.

The application form is provided together with the call.

Applications must be submitted in electronic form, duly completed and dated. They must be signed by the person authorised to enter into legally binding commitments on behalf of the applicant organisation.

Applications must be sent to the following e-mail address:

EAC-VET-mobility-scheme@ec.europa.eu

Any additional question which could arise during the application period should also be sent to the functional mailbox below:

EAC-VET-mobility-scheme@ec.europa.eu

¹⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018R1046>

¹¹ Article 200 FR.

Annexes:

- Annex 1: Declaration on honour
- Annex 2: Mandates
- Annex 3: Budget estimation
- Annex 4: Model grant agreement
- Annex 5: Financial and technical report template
- Annex 6: List of supporting documents (list of invoices for the submission of final financial reports)
- Annex 7a: Methodology for evaluating financial capacity
- Annex 7b: Form for economic and financial analysis
- Annex 8: Template of Terms of reference for the certificate on the financial statements
- Annex 9: Scope of the cost categories and further details on the conditions for compliance of the beneficiary's usual cost accounting practices
- Annex 10: Staff cost rates for persons working on the project
- Annex 11: Decision of the authorising officer authorising the use of unit contributions for vocational education and training actions under the 2019 Multi-Country Action Programme of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance.

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